



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

CALIFORNIA MAN CHARGED WITH ILLEGALLY EXPORTING MATERIALS TO IRAN

NEW HAVEN, CONN—Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that a federal Grand Jury sitting in Bridgeport, Connecticut, has returned an Indictment charging Mohammad Farahbakhsh, also known as Hadi Farah, age 50, an Iranian national and a naturalized U.S. citizen holding a residence in Los Angeles, California, with conspiring to ship items manufactured in the United States to Iran, a prohibited destination.

The two-count Indictment, returned on September 9, 2004, charges Farahbakhsh with one count of conspiracy to ship to Iran pressure-related products that Farahbakhsh attempted to obtain from a Connecticut company, and one count of unlawfully attempting to ship these items to Iran, an embargoed destination under United States law. Farahbakhsh was presented today in United States District Court in Bridgeport on the charges.

Farahbakhsh entered the United States in Los Angeles on September 11, 2004, and allegedly engaged in negotiations with an undercover Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Commerce to obtain several thousand temperature gauges and other materials. Farahbakhsh was arrested by Special Agents on October 20, 2004 in Los Angeles and was subsequently presented before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Los Angeles when he was ordered detained and removed to the District of Connecticut.

Simultaneous with the arrest, Commerce Department Special Agents, assisted by Special Agents from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Defense Criminal Investigative Service executed search warrants at Farahbakhsh's Los Angeles residence as well the home of his former wife in Iowa.

According to documents filed with the Court and to statements made in open court, the Government has obtained further evidence alleging that, between 1997 and 2003, Farahbakhsh shipped computer-related equipment and simulation software that he procured in the United States to a Tehran, Iran company.

Today, U.S. Magistrate Judge Holly B. Fitzsimmons ordered Farahbakhsh detained pending trial. If convicted, Farahbakhsh faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years on the conspiracy charge and ten years on the unlawful attempted export charge, and fine of up to \$250,000 on each count.

“Our nation’s export laws exist to prevent sensitive technology, equipment and military parts from falling into the wrong hands,” U.S. Attorney O’Connor stated. “The alleged illegal activity that has been charged in the indictment and subsequently uncovered during the course of this investigation is very serious, and the possible penalties for this defendant and anyone who exports or attempts to export prohibited items are severe.”

U.S. Attorney O’Connor stressed that an indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which it is the Government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

“U.S. critical technology is an important asset to our national security,” said Robin M. Avers, Special Agent-in-Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in New England. “However, in the wrong hands, the very same technology could be disastrous. Halting the illegal export of sensitive technology is a top priority for ICE.”

“Those who threaten our national security by illegally exporting items to embargoed countries will be vigorously pursued and brought to justice,” stated Wendy L. Wysong, Department of Commerce Acting Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement. “This case demonstrates that anyone who seeks to evade U.S. regulations by making false statements and diverting shipments will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

“Investigating and interrupting the illegal export of technology and hardware is a priority for DCIS,” stated Kathryn A. Feeney, Resident Agent in Charge, Defense Criminal Investigative Service. “DCIS will continue to work with our federal law enforcement partners in order to protect the citizens work with our federal law enforcement partners in order to protect the citizens of this nation.”

Special Agents from the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as well as Defense Criminal Investigative Service investigated the case.

Supervisory Assistant United States Attorney Robert M. Appleton is prosecuting the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.